Rome 21st March 1874

My dear Tom

you tell me that my letters always do you good, so this is as a dose of Physic! I did not hear so good an account of you latterly, but trust that the approach of Spring will set you up, your Winter seems to have come upon you most ungratefully

Dear Maria wrote me recently in her charming way, giving me news of you all, also my dear Claudia does the same, but I fear that she is a mere shadow, fortunately her daughters are grown up, from her arm chair to her bed is all she is able to do

I am daily expecting my Son Walter & his wife from Egypt, where he has gone on a tour for his health & takes me on his way back & I am happy in being able to receive him, for my housekeeping with Dr Valeriani & his wife & sister, is a capital turn out & I am really comfortable

We have just had here the german female band of 32 performers & I was very much pleased with the great precision & nice ear with which they perform'd — They are visiting all the Italian cities & no doubt show a new opening for the employment of women — They beat the Roman playing by far, but this is not saying much for the Italian bands are but so so, & the grand opera is a sad turn out

The private theatre in my house is a very pleasant thing for me, yet there was a comedy got up by children, most successfully & this made us wonder how well they act & learn their parts, but I am glad to say that education is changing the whole face of the Roman people & I was the great mistake of the Pope & the cause of his going down, the leaving the people in such ignorance

But yet I am alarmed at the robberies & I do not venture but in the well protected

places

Two Englishmen were robbed in the ancient baths of Caracalla yesterday!

Then you'll be amused to hear that I am resuming my Consulate for awhile, as a deed has been made out in my name on the supposition that I was still Consul, 'twas a case of London omnibus, a Lady broke her leg in getting out & an English maid who is now here in service was witness so I had to the Judge & my former Secty was my clerk wrote down the evidence - he receives 5 guineas & I 10, but it made me very nervous & I see that I am not equal to such matters any longer, but I can go on with my painting & writing well enough

I have had to pay by imposition £20 for rent of the Archæological Society once in my house & now down in its funds, & I should have kicked but there came as a God send Roman money & extraordinary to relate a letter with 120 francs enclosed without any name or even writing inside!! my name & address outside

for I am really free of my old enemy rheumatism
after 70 baths of Tivoli hot water of Borax & Iron.
But this time I think of going down to the sea
at Porto d'Anzio where the sea air is divine
I dont mean to try & be better than well, but
hope to paint in a small way & eat fish, also I
have friend there to cherish me — I will write
& tell all about it, but I do not go till the
end of the month that is the warmth for I
cannot bear the least cold or damp
You were not so well when I wrote you &
I will hope that you've a touch of Spring as
Marica said, but since then your snow has been
terrific Even the Queen lost her fine day & was
snow'd up — I am amazed at the fate of Mr
Gladstone & cannot understand it the least
for he had a majority of 60 !!!
Now I hope you'll be able to give me a line
to Pal Poli — my picture at San Paolo is I fear
being ruined by the damp church, but it is
now removed to a dry corridore — With my love
to all
Your loving brother Joe